

CHAPTER 8

PHONE SERVICES

Many departments and agencies provide customer service over the phone. The nature of the "customer service" may vary, including providing information, applying for programs or benefits, registering for events, or reporting information. The "customer" may be a specific group of individuals eligible for the program or service, vendors who conduct business with state departments or agencies, or the public at-large.


Since phone services customarily rely upon transmitting information in spoken or oral format and receiving information in aural or auditory format, the phone is not an accessible means of communication for people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or who have speech difficulties, if a TTY is not available. Use of a TTY or the Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) ensures accessible phone services.

TTYs (Teletypewriters)

TTYs are also known as Text Telephones or Telecommunications Devices for the Deaf (TDDs). The preferred terminology among the deaf community is "TTY".


A TTY is a device, which is used in conjunction with a phone, which permits a person who is deaf, hard of hearing, or speech impaired to type messages, which are sent electronically by means of the phone line to the receiver on the other end. The recipient must also have a TTY in order to receive the message on a screen or tape. A TTY is the most direct and effective means of communicating via the phone for a person who is deaf, hard of hearing, or speech-impaired because it allows direct communication without the need for an intermediary.

Every program or service, which has a TTY, should ensure that its staff is trained in how to use the TTY to receive an incoming call and place an outgoing call. If training is necessary, departments and agencies may contact the Disability and Communication Access Board.

 Refer to **ATTACHMENT J** for information on telephone communication devices.

Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS)

Sprint Hawaii operates a relay service in which a communications assistant serves as an intermediary between a TTY user and a voice user. The Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS), in many circumstances, can provide a means for communication. Every program or service which has public phone access must ensure that all employees who use the phone know how to use the TRS to initiate an outgoing call or receive an incoming phone call, especially if there is no TTY available.

 Refer to **ATTACHMENT K** for information on how to use the Telecommunication Relay Services.

8.1 Emergency services

Some phone contact within departments or agencies of the State of Hawaii are considered emergency in nature. Those programs must ensure that contact with people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or speech-impaired is direct through the use of a TTY. Use of the TRS is not appropriate for an emergency service.

EXAMPLE: The Hawaii Health Systems Corporation provides emergency room services at its hospitals. One means of accessing the emergency room services is by phone. A TTY would be required to ensure accessible communication.

EXAMPLE: The Department of Transportation, Highways Division, operates an emergency response road system for persons to report highway emergencies. A TTY at the receiving end of the calls would be required to ensure accessible communication.

8.2 Hot lines and other "special lines"

Some phone services conducted by departments and agencies of the State of Hawaii are hotlines, customer complaint lines, or other special lines which are designated for a specific purpose to receive or impart information by an employee with knowledge on how to respond to the inquiries. These phone lines may be accessed through the TRS, although it is highly recommended that programs give serious consideration to the placement of a TTY in those offices due to the confidentiality of the information conveyed or the importance of having a timely response.

EXAMPLE: The Department of Human Services operates a hotline for reporting suspected child abuse and neglect. Social workers are trained to respond to the calls as soon as possible and often discuss confidential information about families or children. Although a TTY is not required, it is highly desirable because of the confidential and private nature of the phone discussion, as well as the urgency of the information to be conveyed.

EXAMPLE: The Department of Health operates an STD/AIDS hot line for the dissemination of information about HIV, AIDS, and other sexually transmitted diseases. Health workers discuss private and confidential medical information. Although a TTY is not required, it is highly desirable because of the confidential and private nature of the phone discussion.

EXAMPLE: The Department of Labor and Industrial Relations has an Affirmative Action Office which, among other things, receives complaints from people with disabilities who believe that they have been discriminated against by the Department of Labor and Industrial Relations. Although a TTY is not required, it is highly desirable because of the confidential and private nature of the phone discussion.

8.3 Regular phone contact with the public

Most departments and agencies of the State of Hawaii have some contact with the public by phone. The contact may be infrequent or routine. In these programs, it is up to the program administrator to determine the need for a TTY. A TTY is not required in these programs, although certainly encouraged in order to provide greater access for people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or speech impaired.

EXAMPLE: The Department of Hawaiian Home Lands has a program which has contact with the public through the use of the phone when an individual wishes to know how to apply for a home. A TTY is not required. Use of the TRS would most likely suffice, provided that all people in the program who use the phone are familiar with how to use the TRS. However, the program may wish to consider increasing its access by providing TTY access as an option.

EXAMPLE: The Department of Business, Economic Development, and Tourism provides general information on how to start a business in Hawaii to any interested resident. A TTY is not required. Use of the TRS would most likely suffice, provided that all people in the program who use the phone know how to use the TRS. However, the program may wish to consider increasing its access by providing TTY access as an option.

CHECKLIST FOR ENSURING TELEPHONE SERVICES ARE ACCESSIBLE

YES NO

___ ___ All emergency phone services are equipped with a TTY.

___ ___ All staff handling emergency and non-emergency phone lines which are equipped with a TTY have been trained on how to use a TTY.

☞ *Refer to ATTACHMENT J for information on telephone communication devices.*

___ ___ All staff handling non-emergency phone lines which are not equipped with a TTY have been trained on how to use the TRS.

☞ *Refer to ATTACHMENT K for information on how to use the Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS).*